

What is claimed is:

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1. A variant of a serine protease characterized by a modified amino acid sequence of a wild-type amino acid sequence, wherein the modified amino acid sequence comprises a deletion of one or more of positions 70 - 84 corresponding to subtilisin BPN', wherein the variant is not Δ 75 - 83 or Δ 71.

2. A variant according to Claim 1 wherein the serine protease is selected from the group consisting of subtilisin BPN', subtilisin Carlsberg, subtilisin DY, subtilisin 309, proteinase K, and thermitase.

3. A variant according to Claims 1 or 2 wherein the deletion is of one or more of positions 73 - 83 corresponding to subtilisin BPN'.

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4. A variant according to any of the preceding claims wherein the deletion is of one or more of positions 70 and 75 - 82 corresponding to subtilisin BPN'.

5. A variant according to any of the preceding claims selected from the group consisting of:

- (a) Δ 70, 75 - 82;
- (b) Δ 75 - 82;
- (c) Δ 70, 78, 79;
- (d) Δ 70;
- (e) Δ 75;
- (f) Δ 76;
- (g) Δ 78;
- (h) Δ 79;
- (i) Δ 81; and
- (j) Δ 82.

6. A variant according to any of the preceding claims further comprising a substitution of one or more of positions 70 - 84 corresponding to subtilisin BPN'.

7. A variant according to any of the preceding claims further comprising one or more stabilizing mutations.

8. A mutant serine protease gene encoding a variant according to any of the preceding claims.

9. A personal care composition characterized by:

(a) a variant of a serine protease having a modified amino acid sequence of a wild-type amino acid sequence, wherein the modified amino acid sequence comprises a deletion of one or more of positions 70 - 84 corresponding to BPN'; and

(b) a personal care composition carrier.

10. A composition according to Claim 9 wherein the variant is further characterized by a substitution at one or more of positions 70 - 84 corresponding to subtilisin BPN'.

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